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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7722
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1612
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3609
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7883
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 0812
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0507
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 1525
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 1538
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6448
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1495
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0001
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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN - MANAGING THE NEIGHBORS: INDIA

REF: State 85136

Classified by Ambassador Tim Roemer for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The following responses are keyed to reftel questions and are drawn largely from our recent discussions about Afghan elections with senior GOI officials in which we highlighted reftel points.

A) Analysis of India's likely strategic interests in Afghanistan's election: India has made a substantial investment in Afghanistan's democratic future in blood (Indians were killed in last year's bombing of the Indian Embassy in Kabul and while working alongside Afghans to complete a road project) and in treasure (India's claimed aid to Afghanistan totals USD 1.2 billion). India appears to be taking a long view regarding the significance of the August 20 elections, with Joint Secretary TCA Raghavan, the MEA's senior expert on Af-Pak affairs, telling us they should be seen in the larger context of Afghanistan's emergence from decades of conflict toward a democratic future. Quipping that Afghan elections will not resemble those of a Swiss canton, Raghavan stated that India expects - and can tolerate - a certain degree of fraud and irregularities in the electoral process, which he noted India experienced in its first few national elections. Similarly, India takes a pragmatic if not jaded view of Afghanistan's political class: as Raghavan stated, "whatever their flaws, we can not simply wish away the fact that these are the people who defeated the Taliban" and he opined that anti-corruption efforts will "take time" among such people. While Hamid Karzai is a known commodity with long ties to India (he studied political science here and is said to be proficient in Hindi), Indian officials tell us that they value stability in Afghanistan above all else and will deal with whomever prevails in the elections.

B) Assessment of whether India would be likely to urge restraint and play a positive role, publicly or privately: In light of India's long-standing reluctance to be seen to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries (at least those countries with which India does not share a common border), we expect that the GOI will most likely play a positive role in a non-public manner. Should serious violence ensue during the election or post-electoral process, we think it likely that India would also take a more public posture in urging calm.

C) Advice on how we could best encourage India to play such a role: Given India's strong interests in Afghanistan, we think the GOI will on its own initiative reach out to its contacts among influential Afghans to stress the importance of a peaceful and reasonably free and fair election. If serious and non-isolated violence erupts at some point during the process, we could best encourage a helpful Indian role by consulting senior GOI officials here in New Delhi and

coordinating our approach and message.

ROEMER